

**MEETING NOTES**  
**SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM**

**Working Group Meeting**

Wednesday, January 20, 2010, 1:00 p.m.

Department of Public Works, Environmental Programs Division, Large Conference Room

**I. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm. Mr. Coby Skye of Public Works welcomed the Working Group, and introductions were made among attendees and phone participants.

Those in attendance were as follows: Coby Skye, Nilda Gemeniano, Luke Mitchell, Stacy Harvey, Angelica SantaMaria, Natalie Jimenez, and Sevak Khatchadorian with County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works (Public Works); Lars Clutterham with the City of Downey's Green Task Force, and Rick Crandall with Albertsons. Those in attendance via conference call were: Hillary Gordon with Sierra Club, Brian Early with Californians Against Waste, Samantha Martinez and Jennifer Forkish representing the American Chemistry Council, Stephen Joseph representing the Save The Plastic Bag Coalition, Burt Kumagawa and Dorothea Park with County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office, Latoya Cyrus with Charles Abbott, Chandler Hadraba with California Film Extruders and Converters Association, Rebecca Nelson with City of Malibu, Amy Hammes, and Brian Dougherty.

**II. News and Updates**

a) Recent Articles

Mr. Harvey reported on recent news articles relating to single use bags.

- The Maharashtra Pollution Control Board in Mumbai, India plans to clamp down on the illegal manufacturing and importing of plastic bags below 50 microns in thickness.
- City officials have agreed to implement a ban on plastic bags in Brownsville, Texas. The ban is voluntary for 1 year, and then becomes mandatory.

b) Websites Updates

Mr. Mitchell reported that the news articles have been archived to provide a more organized directory of old articles.

c) Environmental Impact Report Update

Mr. Skye provided an update on the status of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) being developed to support proposed ordinances to ban the use of plastic carryout bags. The scope of the document will include unincorporated County areas and in incorporated cities within the County. An Initial Study has been prepared and scoping meetings were held last year. Comments were received during the scoping period and will be reviewed for consideration in developing the draft EIR, which is scheduled to be completed by this Spring. After the draft EIR is released for public review, additional information meetings will be held. The document will be posted on the Program website, and stakeholders will receive an e-mail through the County's e-Notify system when the document is available. We will keep the Working Group aware of the meetings and comments received during the public review period.

**III. Store Operations**

Ms. Gemeniano reported on the status of store participation in the Program. Public Works has identified 67 Category 1 stores located in the unincorporated areas of the County. We are making phone calls to review their progress in implementing the various components of our voluntary Program. We plan to visit the stores and provide technical assistance.

This past December, we received lists of specific store locations from the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, formerly the California Integrated Waste Management Board. Public Works staff is reviewing the report to filter for Category 1 stores located in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. Site visits to the stores will soon follow.

Last year, the County partnered with a consultant of the American Chemistry Council to conduct additional site visits to stores that did not have recycling services. During these follow-up visits, more information about their recycling operations was discussed. From initial store visits, it was discovered that the Unified Grocers provided recycling service and reusable bags to their member stores. The consultant then followed up with those that were not a member of the Unified Grocers to set up plastic bag recycling service.

Mr. Crandall stated that he does not want to see exemptions given to particular stores. All stores that pack purchases in single use bags should therefore bear the burden evenly.

**IV. Public Education and Outreach**

Ms. Jimenez reported on the public education and outreach efforts of the Program. One of our main goals is to reach out to the public to educate them on the difference between the plastic bag recycle bins from trash receptacles. The first countywide campaign was very successful, with over 55 cities participating with a unified

message. Over 55,000 bags were given out to the public, and over 45,000 plastic bags were collected for recycling. Over 57 campaign events were held, which received plenty of media exposure through local news, city newsletters, websites, cable channels, and major network channels. In addition, Coby Skye was featured on KTLA's "Good Morning America" highlighting the large amount of plastic bags collected during the campaign.

During the campaign, reusable bags made by Earthwise were distributed. Mr. Crandall informed the Working Group that their stores also distributed reusable bags made by Earthwise, which inspects their manufacturing plant on a monthly basis as well as tests their bags for heavy metals.

#### **V. News and Updates - Legislative Update**

Mr. Khatchadorian provided an update on the status of legislative bills relating to single use bags. Currently, there are three active state bills which will be heard in their respective appropriation committee. AB 68, which is sponsored by Heal the Bay, and AB 87, which is sponsored by the County will be heard tomorrow in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. SB 228 will be heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee. In addition, there is HR 2091, which is a Federal piece of legislation that is still in the House of Representatives. The Working Group will be updated on any changes.

#### **VI. Benchmark Assessment and Data Gathering**

Mr. Skye discussed the need for more refined data at the store location level as a key issue to better understand at-store recycling and consumption of bags in the unincorporated areas. The data received from the State is not sufficient and the County will need to collect data directly from individual store locations. The next quarterly report will provide an update on the data gathered. This data is vital in preparing recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

#### **VII. Update on Expanded Polystyrene Efforts**

Mr. Skye provided an update on the status of efforts for reducing expanded polystyrene use in the County. The Working Group has been working on developing recommendations to present to the Board of Supervisors on how to phase out the use of expanded polystyrene food containers at County operations, County facilities, and County-sponsored events. The recommendations have been drafted and are currently undergoing final review to make sure they do not have a significant impact on County operations. Once completed, we will move forward to submit the Board Letter for approval.

#### **VII. Next Steps**

Public Works will send out an email notifying of the next scheduled meeting to members of the Working Group.